

# **Maria Otero**

Under Secretary  
Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights  
U.S. Department of State



Maria Otero was sworn in as Under Secretary of State on August 10, 2009. She oversees and coordinates U.S. foreign relations on the spectrum of civilian security issues across the globe, including democracy, human rights, population, refugees, trafficking in persons, rule of law, counter-narcotics, crisis prevention and response, global criminal justice, and countering violent extremism. She also serves as the President's Special Representative for Tibetan Issues.

Born in La Paz, Bolivia, Ms. Otero is currently the highest ranking Hispanic official at the State Department, and the first Latina Under Secretary in its history.

Ms. Otero was formerly the president and CEO of ACCION International, a pioneer and leader in economic development working in 25 countries around the globe. She is recognized as one of the world's leading experts on inclusive economic growth, women's issues and international development. Prior to ACCION, Ms. Otero was the Economist for Latin America for the Women in Development office of USAID. She also served for five years at the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA). Ms. Otero was an adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins' Nitze School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS), in Washington, D.C., before joining the State Department.

President Clinton appointed Ms. Otero to the board of the United States Institute of Peace in 2000, a position that she held for eight years, including one term as Vice-Chair of the board. In June 2006, Ms. Otero was appointed by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to the UN Advisors Group on Inclusive Financial Sectors. Ms. Otero has chaired the board of Bread for the World, and also served on the boards of the Calvert Foundation, Public Welfare Foundation, the Inter-American Foundation and BRAC Holding of Bangladesh. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Ms. Otero's awards and recognition include selection by Newsweek in October 2005 as one of the United States' twenty most influential women; Hispanic Business Magazine's 'Elite Women of 2007'; Notre Dame University's Distinguished Service in Latin America Award; and the Ellis Island Medal of Honor.

Ms. Otero holds an M.A. in literature from the University of Maryland, an M.A. in international relations from Johns Hopkins, and an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Dartmouth College.